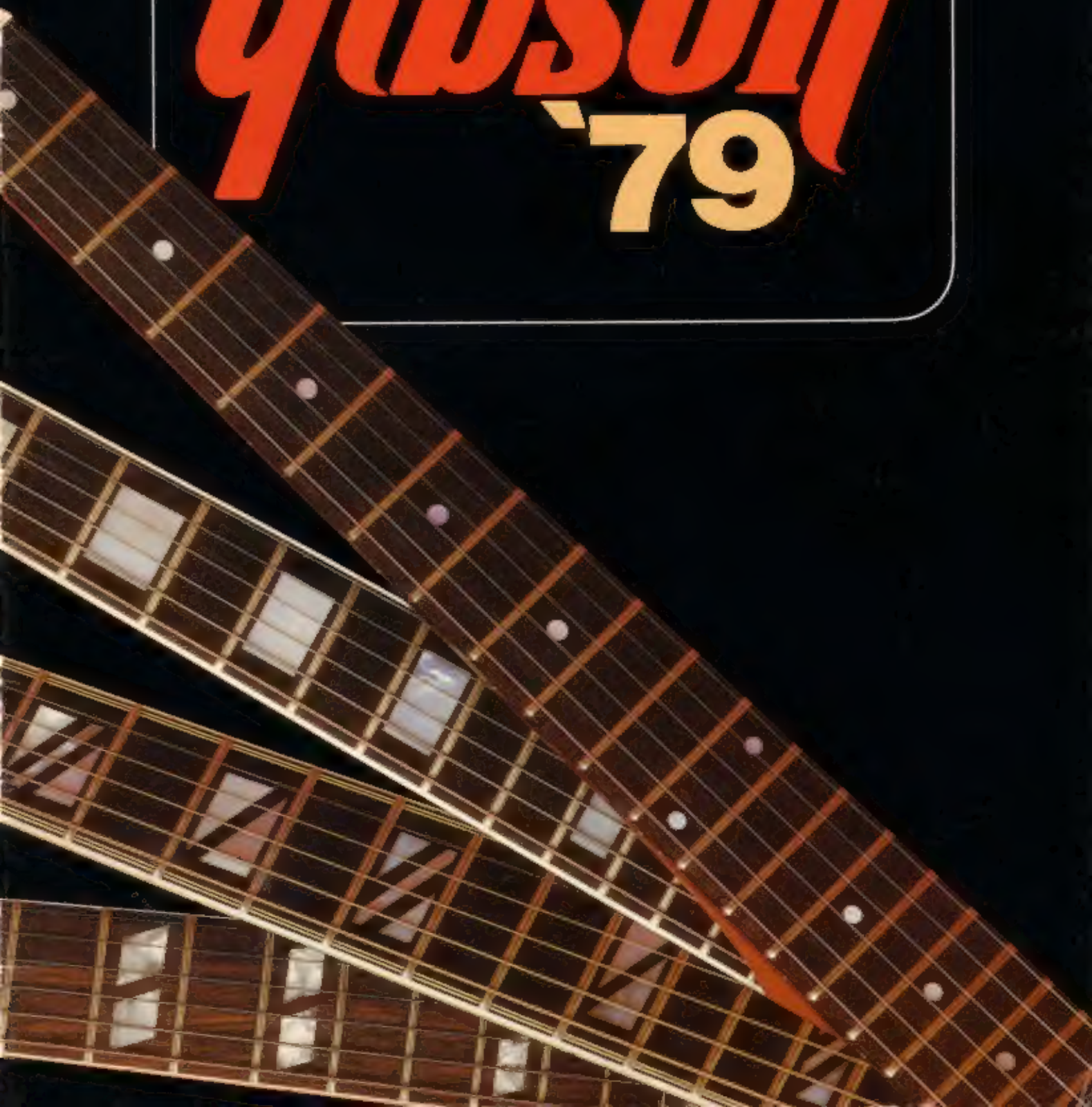


**Gibson**  
**'79**







# Latest from Gibson

Gibson have always experimented with the body shapes of guitars and perhaps the most striking example of their creativity is the Gibson Explorer. Born in 1958, The Explorer was issued in a limited edition to satisfy a growing demand for guitars with a more striking design. Only 40 Explorers were made in 1958 and now, 21 years later, they have emerged again in Explorer II form.

The "Explorer II" differs from the original version, in that the "Explorer II" is constructed of walnut and maple, using a three layer sandwich method. The neck is of similar build, walnut-maple-walnut laminate. The original Explorer was solid korina hardwood, fitted with the then new Gibson Humbucker pickups.



The scale of the "Explorer II" is 24 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches and the ebony fingerboard bears 22 frets. Schaller tuning heads are used and all the fittings are gold-plated. The "Explorer II" looks every bit as distinctive and appealing as the 1958 original. But the proof is in the playing and that is where this Gibson excels.

The "Explorer II" comes fitted with Gibson "Dirty Fingers" pickups, both of them have 12 individually adjustable exposed coils. The sound from the pickups is as unique as the appearance of the Explorer II, they were designed to be extremely powerful and have a facility for heavy distortion. The Dirty Fingers pickups

have an inductance of 8.6 henries and peak resonant frequency of 6 KHz. Coupled with a DC resistance of 16K ohms at 1000 cps, the Dirty Fingers can produce an amazingly powerful, distorted sound.

There are some things that make guitars stand out, usually a feature that makers try hard to emphasise. The Gibson Explorer II has both a body and sound that make it seen and heard above the crowd.



The SG series of guitars are amongst the most famous Gibson fretted instruments. Fine examples of the first SG's made by Gibson change hands at astronomical prices and to prevent this reputable instrument becoming an endangered species, Gibson have issued a new model SG.

This new issue, simply called "The SG", incorporates the best of the earlier SG's features. "The SG" just released has a natural-finish walnut body with a laminated walnut neck. The guitar has a lightning-fast action, a product of a clever combination of rosewood fingerboard and the new Gibson Equa Strings. "The SG" has a 24 $\frac{3}{4}$  inch scale with 22 frets. The machine heads are enclosed Schallers and the guitar features the Tune-o-matic bridge. All fittings are chrome-plated.

Though the previous SG models were made famous by either single coil or humbucking pickups, "The SG" wears a new combination of pickups. The front pickup is a standard humbucker but the rear pickup is a Super Hot, Ceramic Indox VII with exposed coils.

Since their introduction in 1960, the SG guitars have featured many extras but in 1973 they were re-introduced in almost original design. With "The SG" and its improved electronics, Gibson once again have given new vitality to a classic solid guitar.



The ES-335 PRO is the Gibson guitar that 335 lovers have been desiring for years.

The PRO is fitted with two new high output "Dirty Fingers" Humbucking pickups with twelve exposed coils. These are controlled by one tone control and two volume controls.

The ES-335 PRO has a hot sound, it was built for rock players who want to play fast and "dirty", this version of the 335 comes without the coil top switch.

A three position toggle switch selects either individual or both pickups. The PRO is fitted with black speed knobs.

The 335 PRO features a chrome-plated Tune-o-matic bridge and is fitted with a stop bar tailpiece. The fingerboard is rosewood and is marked with pearl dot inlays. Machine heads are chrome-plated.

The ES-335 PRO is available in Antique Sunburst and Cherry Sunburst finishes.

# Latest from Gibson



Born of the famous three hundred series of Gibson semi-acoustic guitars, the Gibson ES-347 TD carries on the remarkable tradition begun by the 335, the 355 and 345 guitars. These guitars filled a need no other guitar could, they provide just the right blend of the attack and volume of solid guitars, coupled with the rounder, more mellow tone of cello-style semi-acoustic models. The three hundreds have been stalwarts of guitarists for 20 years now – and the 347 will soon become as familiar.

The ES-347 TD is an all-maple instrument, with a laminated neck and arched top and back with matching maple rims. A double Venetian cutaway gives access to the whole 24 $\frac{3}{4}$  inch scale ebony fingerboard. The bridge is the Gibson Tune-o-matic, firmly anchored by two individual  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch brass studs. This coupling gives the 347 incredible sustain, aided by a maple centre block that boosts high frequency response. Another Gibson first to complement the perfection of the 347 is the fine-tuning TP6 tailpiece, allowing the guitar to be tuned "down" to the correct pitch. The pickups on this guitar are Series VII high output "Super Humbucking" with individual tone and volume controls. They are gold-plated, like all the other bridge and tailpiece fittings. A three-position toggle switch selects either individual pickups or both, and a coil tap switch places the pickups in the humbucking or non-humbucking position. The famous Gibson neck, with 22 frets, is complimented by pearl block inlays.

Only Gibson could improve on the classic design of the 345 guitar, this time with the beautiful detail work and improved circuitry of the 347.

As they did 20 years ago, Gibson still fill a huge void in the guitar market with this semi-acoustic instrument. The 347 gives players of every style a wide margin of versatility, both tonally and in playing situations.

Few guitars in their basic form have proved as popular as the ES-175 Gibson. The 175 D is an immensely popular guitar among rock and country players as well as jazz artists. Easy action and that famous Gibson neck maintain this. Now Gibson have released the 175 CC, a guitar that is bound to make its presence felt.



Like the 175 D, the CC has an arched maple top, matching maple rims and arched maple back. A Florentine cutaway allows access to all 20 frets in the 24 $\frac{3}{4}$  scale. The bridge and bridge saddle are contoured to ensure maximum acoustic resonance and Gibson has installed a chrome-plated bar tailpiece. The historic single bar, single coil Charlie Christian pickup with individual tone and volume control is fitted. The neck is of laminated maple construction and the rosewood fingerboard bears square inlaid markers.

Once again Gibson have achieved a remarkable goal with the minimum of fuss. By the simple combination of a classic pickup with a classic guitar, a beautiful and individual instrument results.



Gibson semi-acoustic guitars have been long and deserved favourites of band guitarists and the Super V CES should continue this tradition.

The Super V is a pleasing, full-bodied instrument that features the all new Gibson gold-plated, individually adjustable fine tuning jazz tailpiece. The body consists of a carved spruce top, carved maple back and matching solid maple rims. A graceful Venetian cutaway allows easy access to the 25½ inch scale, 20 fret fingerboard. The F holes and pickguard are bound and an adjustable ebony saddle and ebony bridge base ensures maximum resonance.

The Super CES sports two new Gibson Humbucking pickups, each with their own volume and tone control. A three position toggle switch selects either individual or both pickups. The neck is a five ply maple lamination fitted with an ebony fingerboard with pearl block inlays. The peghead is bound and pearl inlaid, the tuning heads are gold-plated.



A single pickup model of the Super V, called the Super V BJB, is also available. It is exactly the same as the CES but features a floating, gold plated BJB jazz pickup mounted by the fingerboard with individual miniature volume and tone controls mounted on the pickguard. Both models of the Super V come in Antique Sunburst or Natural finish. (BJB stands for Bruce J. Bolen).

One of the most beautiful solid body guitars ever to be made is Gibson's new "The Paul". Another small tribute to the father of the electric guitar comes in the shape of this single cutaway, all-walnut constructed solid, one of the most natural looking and playing guitars ever built. The Paul has no frills — but every feature and attribute that makes the Gibson name great.

The body length, at 17¼ inches, balances perfectly with the 12¼ inch width to make a surprisingly light and immensely comfortable instrument. The neck is solid walnut, adorned by a simple ebony fingerboard with pearl dot inlays and side dots. The fully adjustable chrome-plated Tune-o-matic bridge, coupled with a stop bar tailpiece, gives The Paul a clinging, resounding sustain that comfortably matches its "funky" image. Two very powerful and fully adjustable Gibson "Dirty Fingers" pickups with exposed coils provide the signals that any player of The Paul will be surprised and pleased to hear.



Four simple black speed knobs control each pickup's volume and tone while a three-way toggle switch selects front, back or both pickups. The machine heads are all chrome plated and individually enclosed. The neck scale is 24½ inch with 22 frets.

The Paul is destined to become another hallmark of the Gibson drive to provide the ultimate guitar. It looks, feels and plays like a Gibson but as always with Gibson guitars — the power is there when you need it.



# The Steve Howe Interview

Steve Howe needs no introduction. As part of the living entity that is Yes, one of the world's best known rock groups, Steve has risen to fame on the wings of Yes' cerebral, symphonic rock music. This quiet, unassuming man from the London suburb of Hampstead is famous for the excellence of his personal art form - the guitar.

Steve Howe is well praised for his musical achievements, he has won important polls for many consecutive years, being consistently voted the public's choice of the world's best rock guitarist. Steve has been voted into the Gibson Hall of Fame and won last year's Guitar Player award in the U.S. Through all of this praise he remains largely unaffected, continually harking back to his simple beginnings as a player. Steve's one pride and joy actually has 115 parts! It is, of course, his amazing guitar collection.

We asked him, with 115 guitars, does he ever feel like owning just one? Steve replied: "Not really. To be realistic, if I wanted to get in the car and drive across to France to live in a house there, obviously I couldn't take 115 guitars with me. All things come in their time, even obsessions - mine might be buying guitars - but they will change for me, too. I will always have quite a few but I don't know whether I will always have a vast collection. I might carry on collecting and do something really positive with it. I look at my collection as an entity, that's why I'm writing a book on it. It will be a look at what guitars and me are all about. Like a player's collection book. I don't go out and buy Explorers because someone say they are rare, I don't own a lot of collectable guitars either but it would be very hard to dispense with any of them off the top of my head."

Throughout his nine year career with Yes, Steve has maintained very close links with the Gibson company. He is a renowned purveyor of some of the best examples of the Gibson guitar. Not only does he collect them, the ES-175 is the guitar that is synonymous with Steve. He claims it personifies "the Steve Howe sound."

"If there is a Steve Howe sound, it is the 175. It's what I consider to be the most recognisable, when it comes up on records it always cuts through whatever else I'm playing. When the songs comes to a part with the 175 on it, it just takes over."

Steve said he first saw and learnt how guitars were made at the Gibson plant at Kalamazoo. It was a turning point for him, "The first time I ever found out how a guitar was made was when I went to Kalamazoo. I was very excited when I found out how they made Gibson guitars. I was pretty pleased, so I immediately ordered another guitar which I considered to be the best one they were making at the time. It was 'The Les Paul' model which is my favorite beside the Junior in the Les Paul range."

When we came to his studio to interview him, Steve was hard at work recording tracks for his new solo album. With him was a specially built "Steve Howe Gibson", a stunning guitar that Gibson built exactly for Steve's needs.

"I talk to people at Kalamazoo about my ideas for guitars, throw them up and then see which ones to move on. We started talking and I said 'will you make me one of these, and one of these, and one of . . . ' we ended up agreeing to make the 175 special. We're always talking about the other guitar that they are going to make for me! I'd like to give them as much help as I can as a guitarist because they have always had an interest in the player. They did show me how Gibsons are made."

"My special Gibson (modelled on his favorite 175) is in imitation of a Switchmaster. I found the three pickups on the Switchmaster was a really good idea. I used it a lot on stage and in the studio and found I had a nice selection of sounds. I always thought of having a 175 with three pickups, partly because some Les Paul Custom have three. Nowadays there isn't a custom full bodied guitar. There is the Super 400 and the L5 but they are really large guitars. I wanted the smaller 175 body which I find most comfortable. The neck on my special is identical to that of a '63 model 175 D. As for the top, well, I always find machine heads very close together so I said: 'put the Super 400 head on it. Then we looked at pickups. Gibson said the best thing that they were doing at that moment was the new Super Humbuckers."



"I tried them out on the new Les Paul Anniversary. I have always thought that if you have a quantity of guitars, you don't need one to imitate another. I modelled my special around the songs that we were doing on stage because a guitar has to be best suited for what you are going to play on it."





I needed it to be a 175, a Switchmaster, a Les Paul with frets up to D and a stereo guitar with an out of phase position. They were the requirements and that is the guitar that came out of it".

Steve brought six special guitars along to the studio, those that he values the most. They all happen to be Gibsons. He told us why they are special.

"The twin neck is just that kind of guitar, it offers me such versatility that it has always been special to me. The Barney Kessel just came off the top of my head because it is such an outrageous guitar. It is outrageous to play with those big cutaways. It is a jazz guitar but it was made at the stage when they realised that Barney Kessel did rock sessions. The 175, for all the reasons I've given, it is a very practical, easy guitar that is a lot of guitars in one. What it has become now is more like my sound. The one I'm identified with. I'm developing other sounds all the time, but that one will always crop up on my records - and Yes records.

The Country Western is like my favorite guitar, it's my favorite acoustic flat top. I first saw Chet Atkins playing one and because it had the same fret markings as the 175, I became interested. Anything with a Florentine cutaway was on my list. I liked that and the size of the neck. The Country Western size is just right for me, I love that sort of action. The Gibson flat tops are the only guitars on which you can forget what sort of guitar you are playing. On a Gibson you can play things that you normally couldn't play on a flat top guitar. The action is superb, you are just so free on the neck. I use it all the time at home. When I pull it out people say 'you should have that guitar down in the studio' that's probably why it is here today.

"As for the Junior, it saw me through a lot of recording sessions. I did all of Tales of Topographic Oceans, apart from one side, with it. All the electric guitar, I use it on a lot of things, in the studio there is only one guitar that sounds like that. Whether it is through a Pignose, small amp or fuzz pedal, it has a very electric, characteristic sound.

"The L4C is such an obvious choice. I've got a 175 D and I want an acoustic guitar exactly the same. It is hand carved inside. It is very gracious. It is also certainly very easy to play, that is where Gibson keep scoring - in ease of playing. The L4C is a very intimate guitar, at home I can pick it up and play anything I want on it. I haven't had it more than a few years so I think it will come into its own."

Steve Howe - a guitarist without peer. He knows his favourite guitars and they are Gibsons - instruments without peer.



# Looking at the RD Series

No guitarist would ever debate Gibson's position as the most established and reputable guitar maker in the world. It is ironic but very fitting that the most revolutionary fretted instruments on the market today are the product of Gibson's own Research and Development department. They are the RD guitars.

Just looking at these remarkable instruments gives the impression that there are surprises lurking all around them. The body of an RD guitar or bass is beautifully sculptured and balanced; musicians claim they fit the standing or seated player like a glove. Many players notice the longer scale neck first, but all are stopped in their tracks by the sound of the first note they play.

The RD series pioneered active electronics in solid guitars. Though both the RD Standard and RD Standard bass have the best passive electronics available, the RD Custom, RD Artist and RD Artist bass feature passive, active compressed and active expanded modes that give them a musical fourth dimension. The story behind the development of the RD Series is worth retelling.

In 1975 Bruce Bolen, the Gibson Product Development Director, urged his personal requirements from electric guitars onto the Gibson design team. Bruce wanted a guitar that could produce a reduction of initial attack then the swell of the note after it has been struck, much like a pedal steel guitar. The pedal steel player uses a volume pedal to achieve this but

Moog and design team members put their heads together and came up with plans for the basic electronics of the RD guitars. Moog designed a special compression circuit to create the reduced attack and later the swell that Bruce wanted plus an expansion circuit unlike any other. They were put on show after many exhaustive months of field tests. The reaction from players was overwhelming.

There is no doubt that the introduction of active circuitry to guitars has increased the tonal possibilities and completely changed the way guitarists, especially bass players, strike the strings. Cutting, bright notes are made possible simply by turning the RD dials and the amount of physical effort needed to play fast and hard is greatly reduced.

The two most important sounds obtainable from the RD Series guitars are achieved by expansion and compression. Expansion makes the notes explode off your pick. There's a



strong attack followed by a fast decay. It adds musical dynamics to your picking attack. Compression spreads all the RD energy throughout the entire note. It swells and sustains, it even puts a ceiling on your sound, creating a peak limiter effect. Separate volume controls mix the compression and expansion and the separate bass and treble controls allow you to independently mix low and high frequencies.



The RD Series comprises of five models, two of them possessing the best of passive electronics. The RD Standard comes fitted with the explosive Gibson Series VII Humbucking pickups specially designed for it. Each pickup has its own tone and volume control and a three position toggle switch selects both or individual pickups. Black speed knobs compliment its contoured maple body. Like the other RD Series guitars, it has a laminated maple neck with 22 frets in a 25½ inch scale. The Standard RD



has a rosewood fingerboard with dot inlays and can be ordered in Natural, Tobacco Sunburst or Walnut finishes.

The RD Standard bass features the same body styling as the other instruments in the RD Series. It has a three point adjustable Tune-o-matic bridge with a chrome plated dual purposes tailpiece (that is, the strings can either enter through the body or connect to the end of the bridge). The scale length is 34½ inches and the fingerboard can be either ebony or maple with 20 frets. The RD Standard base can be supplied in Ebony or Natural finish, its pickups are from the explosive Series III that were specially designed for this instrument.

The RD Artist bass has the same body and neck construction as the RD Standard and also possesses a 34½ inch scale over 20 frets. It has the Tune-o-matic chrome plated bridge with dual purpose tailpiece and choice of ebony or maple fingerboard. Here the similarity ceases. The RD Artist bass bears two specially designed Series V active Gibson Humbucking pickups. A three position switch selects expansion/compression mode, standard active electronics or "bright" function.

The Artist bass has both bass and treble tone controls and two volume controls. The volume control for the front pickup intensifies compression and the rear pickup volume control boosts expansion. This bass has a beautiful pearl inlay on the head and comes in Antique Sunburst, Ebony, Natural or Fireburst finish.

Small detail differences distinguish the RD Custom and the RD Artist guitars from each other, the RD

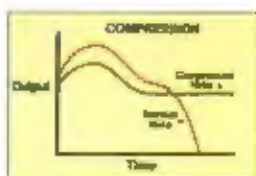
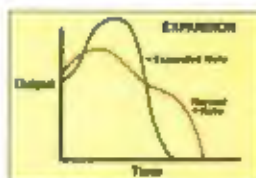
Artist has gold-plated fittings and is available in Natural, Fireburst and Ebony finishes. The fittings on the Custom model are chrome-plated and it is available in Natural and Walnut finishes. However, both models possess the active electronics that set these guitars apart.

As Bruce Bolen says himself, the individual bass and treble controls allow the player to select an exact blend of frequency response at the twist of a dial. As are most effective innovations, the design is very simple and a complex mix of sounds can be achieved by using the most standard controls.

Body and neck specifications for the RD Artist and Custom are the same and both the RD Artist and RD Custom are fitted with specially designed Series VI Humbucking pickups. These pickups are selected by a three way toggle switch, another two way switch selects standard active electronics or bright mode. A separate bass and treble control is fitted, as well as two separate volume potentiometers.

When the RD Series of guitars and basses were first designed, the Gibson Research and Development department wanted to pack their electronic innovations into the most suitable body. The RD guitars were styled at the same time as their active circuitry was developed, in this way the design of this instrument was a completely integral process. The result of this integral design is quite obvious — guitars and basses that are balanced and effective without gadgetry or ornamentation.

Each of these guitars, as well as the basses, come with a plush lined case, custom built for them. A myriad of sounds comes with each guitar, as their appearance indicates.





# Lab Series: A new kind of amp

A collaboration of great brains ensured its sound conception and exhaustive field testing proved it — the Lab Series amplifiers are among the best.

The designers of the Lab Series amps were very fortunate to be able to call upon two great teams of experts when they began their work — Moog provided the electronic knowledge and helped the designers study "sound control" while the Gibson guitar makers told them everything they ever needed to know about guitarist's likes and guitar signals. Most important of all, the Lab Series makers were constantly in touch with working musicians — the eventual users of the amps.

Sitting in on recording sessions, searching out criticism and sampling tastes required a lot of hard work but the results are worth it — technologically, the amps from the Lab Series are the finest.

The designers tackled the most difficult problems first. It is accepted that the transistor revolutionised the electronics world, it has been perfected to fit numerous applications but has never adequately replaced the valve or vacuum tube in musical instrument amplifiers. The Lab Series employs new high voltage transistors that overcome the problems of low voltage transistors, allowing the designers to develop exactly the sound that musicians look for. An added bonus was discarding the mass of wiring that made older design amplifiers unreliable.

Versatility in an amplifier is one of its most important attributes and the makers of the Lab Series amps kept this in mind. While building an amp with a mellow sound that musicians appreciate for its purity of tone, circuits were added to colour that sound.

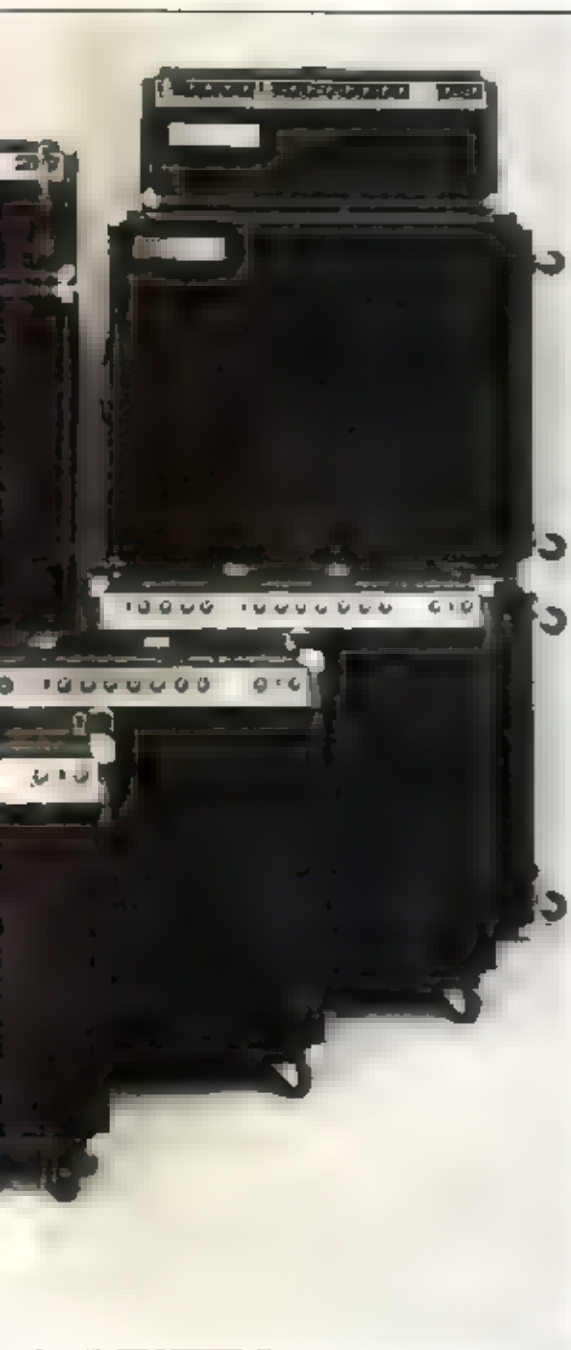
A frequency control was included, allowing the player to "tune in" various frequency bands and accent or diminish them. A special mid range control adjusts the volume of whatever frequency is selected. The Lab Series amps have an excellent distortion circuit that emphasises the best harmonic colours. There is also a Multifilter that re-arranges the harmonics. It can give an electric guitar some of the acoustic guitar's character by re-shaping its overtones.

One glance at a Lab Series amp control panel gives you an idea of how specific the controls are. Here is a brief run-down of the controls of the L 7 amplifier: On channel I, there is a bright switch that accentuates treble, as well as bass mid range and treble controls. There is a separate volume gain control. On channel II, there is a bright switch, bass, mid range (which works specifically with the frequency control) and treble tone controls. A Multifilter reshapes and simulates acoustic guitar harmonics. There is a reverb control to add to the channel II straight sound.





# plifier



A Compressor control can be used to restrict volume at the output stage (not at the instrument or input volume) to adjust volume as the input signal increases. A master volume control adjusts the gain of both channels.

Overdrive distortion is a common effect that many guitarists like to use. Rather than be limited to obtaining that sound at one volume, the Lab Series builders designed the Compressor control so musicians could have that overdrive sound and add overtones, without playing at a constant loud volume.

The hot, responsive sound that an overdriven amplifier gives sounds good but giving it too much input can bring on ruinous distortion - the Compressor control puts a smooth limit on output volume.

The advantage of full three band equalisation is obvious. Rather than have a room or venue shape your sound YOU can shape it to sound best no matter what the conditions, thanks to the frequency and tone controls.

All Lab Series guitar amplifiers have the same controls, as do the bass amps except for a reverb footswitch jack. The bass amps have a "deep" switch instead of a bright switch on both channels.

To show just how versatile the Lab Series range is, the tiny L-3 amp has a special loop input that allows effects to be introduced to the amp between the pre-amp and power amp stage. The L-3 combines high power with a compact size, delivering this power through a single 12 inch speaker. The use of a stereo lead allows the guitarist to obtain high effect levels with a minimum of background noise.



When they were designed, the Lab Series amps were designed to be tough. Many hours of intensive stress and reliability tests left bench tops littered with blown output and driver transformers and destroyed speakers. Chassis were run at full volume and cooked in ovens until their transformers smoked. At least the Lab Series makers know what components can be relied upon. Tone burst tests showed how the amps would handle power surges. Vacuum tubes were rented to test the amps with M-log in "uncontrolled" conditions.

The construction of the Lab Series amps is very solid. The sides of the amp are solid pine much tougher than the particle-board that other makers use. The panels are finger locked at the corners for extra strength. The cab corners are protected by steel shoulders. All circuits are protected by a shock absorption system. Power handling capacity is very high with eight output transformers, two driver transformers and an over-sized heatsink. A circuit diagram is printed on the back panel for quick reference.

Lab Series amplifiers were considered very carefully at the design stage and that care has produced six amplifiers with admirable specifications. The testing was exhaustive but it paid off. The Lab Series amps will surprise many with their range of effects and sounds. They will work for the player day and night, they were designed for it - and that's no surprise.

**L-2 Bass amplifier** 100 watts, single channel, two piece amp with one 15 inch speaker.

**L-3 Guitar Amplifier** 60 watts, single channel, one piece amp with one 12 inch speaker.

**L-4 Bass amplifier** 200 watts, twin channel, two piece amp with two 15 inch speakers.

**L-5 Guitar amplifier** 100 watts twin channel amp with two 12 inch speakers.

**L-7 Guitar amplifier** 100 watts twin channel amp with four 10 inch speakers.

**L-9 Guitar amplifier** 100 watts twin channel amp with one 15 inch speaker.

**L-11 Guitar amplifier** 200 watts twin channel amp with eight 12 inch speakers.



# Alf Fidler, the man behind the quality



Alfred Fidler, didn't get into the guitar business by accident, he was born into it. An Englishman from Essex, he's the son of a guitar maker who kept his shop in part of the house. Needless to say it wasn't long before son followed father and Alfred began learning various phases of guitar construction, proving an able apprentice at a very early age.

These days Alfred doesn't make guitars, but his thorough knowledge and understanding of guitar making definitely gives him substantial credentials to be Gibson's Quality Assurance Manager.

In essence, Alfred is the key link in a quality control chain that leads directly from the drawing board to the stage. His position encompasses a variety of responsibilities but most importantly his job is to ensure that the instrument reaching the musician meets all of the high standards set by the Gibson company.

A finished product is only as good as the individual parts that make it up, Gibson knows this and that's why they've gone to such great lengths to develop a quality control system. Broken down there are essentially two phases to the operation: what goes on in the plant to control the creation and production of the guitar, and what steps are taken to ensure product control from the factory door to the player's hands.

In the factory each guitar goes together in a series of steps. There are eight primary phases and within these there is an intricate system of checking and cross checking. Gibson believes in continually inspecting its product and employs almost 10% of its Nashville staff as inspectors.

"There are inspectors for every phase of the operation," said Fidler. "Individual inspectors are at each of the eight stations within production: machining department, fingerboard assembly, neck assembly, body assembly, white wood, finishing department, buffing department and final assembly, as well as a sound and playing check with final once over."

This quality-conscious attitude of Gibson pays off in several ways but it also allows them to keep a finger daily on the quality of their production. "Each inspector," said Alfred, "prepares a report on a daily basis of the rejects and passes of their part of the operation. Every week we review the figures and find out the percentage of items that are to be returned to the line for reworking." This enables them to quickly identify any temporary hitch in the operations.

Ray Schoenherr, as Quality Control manager, inspects the inspectors and of course Alfred checks the checks. On any given day Fidler may drop into the neck assembly area for a random spot check, or he may check over the wood lots, or he may look in on the buffing operations, all with a keen, experienced eye. If necessary Alf has the authority to stop factory production entirely, so far it hasn't been necessary!

Alfred's experience, however, didn't just come from his father's workshop. He began an apprenticeship with the Henri Selmer Company in their guitar service department where he spent three years before it became Norlin Music (UK) Limited. In 1976 he moved to Nashville where he's now based. He spends a good deal of time shuttling between the Kalamazoo and Nashville plants checking up on everything.

Being a musician as well helps Alfred at this end of his work. At the age of eight he began playing guitar and later spent six years on a part time basis studying classical guitar at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

The stringent quality controls applied during the manufacture of each Gibson guitar ensure that it reaches the packing stages exactly the way the company wants to present it to the players, but it's often thousands of miles between the workshop doors and the players. Extreme climate changes during shipping can cause some neck distortion and other minor problems that simply need to be put right when they land in the country. Here Gibson has stepped up its effort to ensure that the instrument musicians receive, whether it's in Tokyo or London, remain true to the standards that the company has set for its product.

To keep close tabs on their guitars that are exported, Gibson now requires what they call "landed quality reports". These are to be filled out by each dealer who must open and inspect each guitar before it is sent out. Any minor problems are repaired on the spot and anything more serious is returned to the factory. The reports give a breakdown of the condition of a shipment of instruments so that the company can gauge the success of their shipping practices.

To take that step a bit further Alfred makes various field trips and talks to musicians about the quality of the instruments they have received as well as the state they received them in. He'll also visit dealers to see if there are any particular problems.

This goes hand in hand with Alfred's responsibility for all warranty-related work. The company's warranty program stands as a testament to the success of Gibson's quality controls. For example, in the Nashville plant only 1% of the instruments that go out are returned to the factory for repairs. An additional 1% show minor faults which are corrected in the field. An impressive record, but one that comes through diligence and care.

Gibson knows that musicians are demanding, that's why they're demanding in the production and shipping of each guitar. After all, Gibson has a reputation, they're not about to let it slip away, Alfred Fidler assures that it doesn't.

# Gibson Philosophy

## *Quality/Innovation/Prestige*

### **"LET'S FIND A BETTER WAY"**

"Let's find a better way" might well be an unwritten slogan of the Gibson company. It was certainly the sentiment of shoe store clerk Orville Gibson when he started to improve guitar designs in the 1870's. Until he turned his attention to the instrument, the guitar had been a lady's boudoir plaything in the USA. Almost certainly Orville was the first man to fit steel strings to a guitar.

This air of experimentation still exists within Gibson today. Some of the latest Gibson instruments, the RD Series of solid electrics for example, represent major advances in guitar design. The traditions laid down by that Kalamazoo shoe salesman are still carried on.

Orville compared guitars of his day to both mandolins and violins. From the mandolin he borrowed the steel strings and

most importantly, from the violin he took the arched top and, later, the tailpiece. It's fair to say that until he started producing his first arch-top, steel string acoustic guitars, the instrument did not figure in popular music. By 1902 he was in business with a staff of thirteen!

Orville's personal philosophy was one of constant improvement and over the following 30 years the company refined the guitar until they made the classic "dance band guitar" of the '20s and '30s.

These innovations are only made where a musical advance is possible. Naturally, constant efforts are made to improve on the high Gibson quality and

Gibson knows from its quality reports that the quality of Gibson guitars produced today has never been higher. However, merely being the best is not enough for Gibson. Gibson has to stay the best.

Since so many of today's top guitarists use Gibson guitars the philosophy must be right. In fact the Gibson prestige is directly related to Gibson quality and Gibson innovation.

Today Gibson are pushing back the twin frontiers of craftsmanship and technology. In all the Gibson factories the vital building processes are still done by hand, continuing the craft tradition Orville began. In the various laboratories technicians are seeking to produce even more sensitive pick-ups, better switching systems and new methods of improving the guitar sound.

Gibson is an exciting place to be because of the "house philosophy". "Let's find a better way" really does seem to sum it all up.





# Playing Gibson Today



B.B. King is a living legend. He is the best known and most influential bluesman of them all. Since his first meeting with Sunny Boy Williamson, B.B. King's name has travelled from Memphis to Melbourne, borne by the crystal sound of his blues guitar.

B.B. King was born in Itta Bena, Mississippi, on September 16, 1929. He was raised by foster parents before moving to Memphis where he met Sunny Boy Williamson who was running a local radio programme. It was Williamson who nick-named him Blues Boy and by letting him have ten minutes of his show to play DJ gave King his start.

Since the release of his first record, Miss Martha King, in 1949, B.B.'s fame has spread far. A procession of blues classics established him as the leading bluesman in the US. He did not play the rough-edged, raw blues of Muddy Waters but borrowed from the style of Charlie Christian to produce a clean, almost jazzy style that built his white audience nearly as big as his black following. He has played with scores of young guitarists as well as his more experienced contemporaries. One name is always associated with him, though. It's Lucille.

From the beginning, B.B. King has played Gibsons. He has made the Gibson ES-355 famous. He now plays a custom model that Gibson made specially for him, it is called Lucille and is one of a kind. As he did more than 30 years ago, B.B. King helps make the Gibson name great.

Many words have been used to describe Jan Akkerman but one word fits best: virtuoso. Since his rise to prominence in the famous Dutch band Focus, Akkerman has appeared as one of the leaders of the guitarists art.

Jan Akkerman joined Focus in 1970 when they were recording the In and Out of Focus album. Akkerman's spell with Focus was by no means his only notable touring and recording venture but it did show his work as a bandleader and his talent as a soloist, improviser and composer to be recognised.

Akkerman and renewed Dutch bandier Peter van der Kamp set up a new focus line up in 1971 they had played before in The Hangers and Branches. This edition of Focus relied heavily on Jan's ability to improvise. Together the band toured the UK and America had hit singles in Sylvia and Heels Poles and got several albums.

Focus went into decline when Akkerman left the band suddenly in 1976. He has released two solo albums during his time with them: the first was a collection of tracks recorded in the mid-70s and the second was an album done in collaboration with George Fenton, Columbia University professor of Music. This album showed incredible versatility with stringed instruments. Jan features the electric and acoustic guitar. With the release of Taternake his solo album Jan showed how well he could play orchestral themes in a rock style. His favorite guitar has always been a Gibson and his use of the Les Paul Custom had made that guitar a Jan Akkerman trademark.



PFM was spawned from the Italian pop group Quarta and bassist Patric Dinklage rose from the jazz-rock band, PFM.

Dinklage was one of the unknown quantities of European rock when he joined PFM in 1974. He soon proved his abilities being noted as one of the best exponents of the electric bass. When Dinklage joined PFM, Englishman Pete Sinfield was writing English lyrics for them and together they worked on the group's album, The World Became The World. It made the US charts. When the group toured North America and Canada a live album was recorded. It was successful on the US charts.

PFM had trouble delegating the role of lead vocalist but instrumentally they were as strong as ever. Patric Dinklage was noted by the Gibson company as being a bassist with rare talent and a fine exponent of the Gibson bass.

His reputation spread as a session man before he joined the Yardbirds by that time he had decided that the road was not for him. Instead young Jimmy Page spent his time making hits with The Who's 'My Generation', then 'Gloria' with The Rolling Stones, Pet Clark, Tom Jones, Va Doonican and George Fame.

Page refused the first offer he was made to join the Yardbirds in 1965 but took the plunge in 1966 playing twin lead parts with Jeff Beck. When the job of fulfilling commitments the hand had made came to him Page formed the New Yardbirds which later became Led Zeppelin.

Jimmy Page is now the undisputed king of heavy metal guitar. With Led Zeppelin, Page has plumbed the depths of mythology and used his power rock guitar to conjure up multi-faceted images. Folk-oriented material flowed from his pen, a far cry from the blues rock songs he played with the Yardbirds. Among the leaders of the British rock movement, Jimmy Page is a guitarist without peer.

With the consistency of his compositions, Page has proved that Led Zeppelin are indeed one of rock's most dependable groups. The panache with which he performs on stage helps the group maintain their position as one of the world's leading rock acts.

Page has a few trademarks, one of them is his low slung Gibson Les Paul. Whether pounding out power chords or playing ethereal solos with a violin bow, Jimmy Page knows he can depend on his Gibson.



The UK has spawned some great heroes and certainly in the rock music field there is no hero greater than Eric Clapton.

Eric Clapton, once the retiring art student from Surrey, has undoubtedly topped the British guitarists of the 1960s. With the Yardbirds, he recorded 'For Your Love' with them. A short time later Clapton was the star of John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, when he acquired a reputation as one of the best instrumental soloists ever to tread a British stage.

The Bluesbreakers gave way to Cream, where Clapton excelled both as a composer and virtuoso on the electric guitar. International recognition of his talents and the acclaim he received was equalled only by his modesty. Clapton overcame personal problems to come back after his work with Derek and the Dominoes and deal with a songbook. Over the years his solo albums have been showcases of songwriting talent not to mention his incredible talent for soul-searing guitar playing.

Eric Clapton is a rare player with a special talent for reaching what is called for in a special moment. When these moments arise he is quite likely to reach for his Gibson Explorer to provide the special music.

John McLaughlin is one of the UK's most famous musical exports. At the age of 14 he was playing in rhythm and blues bands and it was there that he first gained attention as a virtuoso guitarist. From stints with seminal jazz-flavoured bands like the Graham Bond Organisation, McLaughlin shot to fame with the recording of 'Extrapolation', an extraordinary album that brought McLaughlin to the notice of US jazz band leaders Tony Williams and Miles Davis.

McLaughlin was soon cutting albums in the US, recording 'Bitches' Brew', 'In A Silent Way' and 'A Tribute To Jack Johnson' with Davis. A solo album with Buddy Miles and the creation of the Mahavishnu Orchestra saw McLaughlin cement his place in jazz rock history. His influence spread as far as the Mahavishnu Orchestra's recordings.

Since then, McLaughlin has recorded with Carlos Santana and his own Indian-style acoustic group Shakti. One development that provided an extension of his sound was the creation of the Gibson 13 string guitar, a concept that grew out of his intense study of eastern music and the Indian stringed instrument, the vina. The Gibson company made this instrument expressly to cope with the problems imposed by a linear form of music. It is designed so John can accompany himself. It has seven sympathetic strings angled across an F hole which he strums in accompaniment, using his little finger with a fingerpick, while playing lead on the regular strings.

With the development of this instrument, McLaughlin is assured of his musical progression. He knows that whenever he needs it, the Gibson company stand behind him with all the help they can give.





# Equa Strings

Gibson, forever the innovators of the string instrument world, have come up with another first. Again, the best idea is the simplest and with the introduction of the Gibson Equa guitar strings, the leaders in string research have proven their position at the head of the field.

The all-new Equa Series string sets were designed to provide equal tension, an even 16-pounds pressure is exerted on each string. The most obvious advantages are keeping the guitar neck straight and bringing its action down. Equal tension across the neck of a guitar means an equal force distribution to the fingerboard. Unequal force distribution encourages both neck and fingerboard distortion that often cannot be corrected by truss rod adjustments.

Each Equa Series string requires the same tension to pull it to its respective pitch (that is 16 pounds for both E-1st and E-6th). Machinery in the Gibson string factory in Elgin, Illinois is now required to produce strings with consistent tolerances of plus or minus .001 of an inch resulting in strings that have similar life span because of their equal stress. The output of Equa Series electric guitar strings is equally balanced, as are their tonality, volume and sustain.

A set of Equa Series strings on your guitar will make two advantages immediately obvious.



There will be no need to adjust your playing technique because of the balanced feel of Equa Strings. You won't have to change the way you attack the strings to avoid them buzzing on the frets; equal tension means that all the strings will need the same action height. One buzzing string can force you to raise your guitar's entire action, but not with Equa Strings.



String tautness is critical in the selection of bridge insert settings on Tune-o-matic type bridges. When a string is attacked, there is an almost negligible length of the string that does not vibrate extending over the bridge and into the playing length. This distance changes with string tautness and in effect changes

the required position of the bridge slightly (the string focal point). Equa Strings reduce the need to stagger bridge inserts; it leaves a great deal more adjustment within the bridge and increases the amount of control over the strings' sound. This is especially helpful in intonation control on acoustic guitars and electric instruments with non-adjustable bridges.

Equa Strings have made the often very difficult tuning of guitars extremely simple. Unequal tension on tuning machines usually encourages slippage of the string. An even amount of stress on all machines eliminates this, making less likely "rogue" detuning that can often mar a performance.

Equa Strings are made for all steel strung guitars—acoustic, semi-acoustic and electric. Their development is the greatest step forward string makers have made since the 1870's—when Orville Gibson first put steel strings on a guitar.

# The Gibson Hall of Fame



Musicians have always honoured the Gibson guitar, now the makers of these famous instruments are doing the same for players. To mark the 75th year of Gibson a GIBSON HALL OF FAME has been established at the headquarters of Gibson in Nashville, Tennessee.

Members of the world's music press now gather every January in California to act as the Board of Directors of the Gibson Hall of Fame. Along with them are world authorities on fretted instruments, designers, authors and the Gibson representatives.

Nominations promoting artists for consideration are made by the Board in the year preceeding the annual meeting and the only requirement is that the nominated artists should have been closely associated with Gibson instruments. They need not have ever been Gibson endorsees.

Les Paul was one of the first players to be nominated into the Gibson Hall of Fame. It's no wonder, of course, the "father of

the electric guitar" could hardly have been missing. One thing is for sure, after that the selection gets harder.

Because of the incredible popularity of the guitar — especially the electric guitar — it's to be expected that artists of this instrument will take the majority of places in the Hall of Fame. It should be stressed though that players of all fretted instruments are included and over the years it's certain that there will be some extremely interesting nominations.

The process of voting is relatively simple. A meeting takes place during the Western Market NAMM Convention in the Disneyland Hotel, Anaheim, this location and time was chosen because representatives of the music industry gather there for this important event.

At the meeting each member of the Board votes on the nominations and clear results are quickly reached.

The first year saw a total 18 players elected to the Hall of Fame. In the following years only four new members will be elected.

Each artist nominated for the Gibson Hall of Fame must accept his nomination in writing. After consideration, voting and counting, the result is announced and the honoured player receives a specially created Jostens plaque at a formal presentation to which the media are invited.

A permanent record of the Hall of Fame role of honour is mounted in the lobbies of the Gibson factories at Kalamazoo, Michigan and Nashville.

There's nothing else quite like the Gibson Hall of Fame in the world of music. Artists will be honoured for their "contribution to contemporary music" — direct commercial success is not necessarily a criteria. This is the opportunity to bring many fine, but underrated players to the public's attention.

It is a Gibson first.



# Fine tuning with the TP6

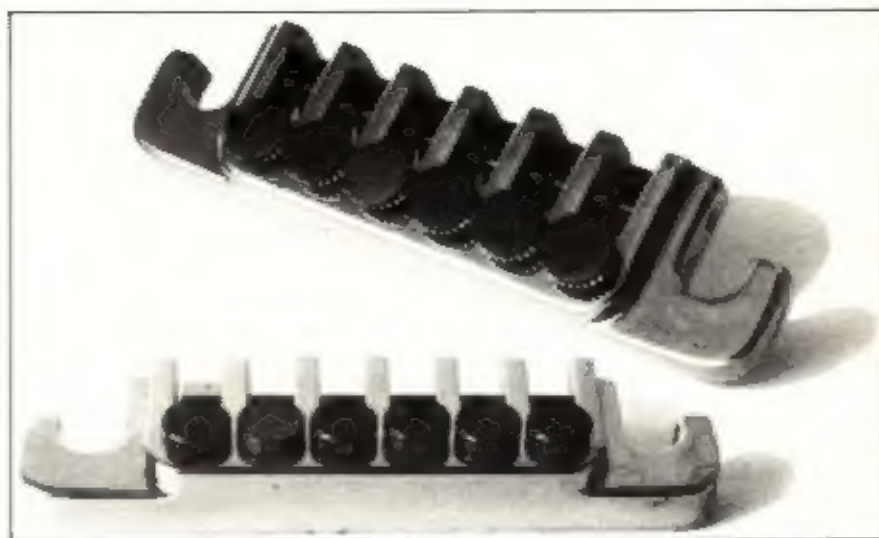
When it comes to simple ideas, Gibson knows the best of them. As innovators in guitar design since the 1870's, Gibson have a tradition of applying the best, most simple ideas in the most direct and useful way.

The Gibson TP-6 fine-tuning tail piece is just such an idea. An ingenious device that incorporates a stop bar tail piece, the TP-6 allows guitarists to perform that rare fine adjustment to an instrument's state of tune - that is, to "tune down".

Most guitarists will agree that, while it is fairly easy to "tune up" a guitar, to sharpen the pitch of the string to the required amount, it is very difficult to flatten a string to the correct pitch. The TP-6 utilises a set of six hinged jaws to hold the end of the strings and a simple screw to raise or lower the cantilevered jaw, thus moving it forward or back by very small increments. A string can be "tuned down" without undue stretching or wear and the small adjustment needed to keep the guitar at correct tune prolongs string life considerably.

As the machine heads provide a coarse tuning adjustment, they wear out strings much more quickly and the string tension in turn wears the machine heads. With this simplest of mechanisms, Gibson have added years of life to expensive machine heads and provided a trouble-free and rapid method of tuning guitars.

The TP-6 tuning tailpiece comes in either chrome or gold-plated finishes, to match whatever Gibson instrument you may own. They can be fitted quite quickly and need no special adaptations on guitars fitted with stop bar tail pieces.



Since Gibson are among the world's largest guitar and fretted instrument makers, it is only logical that they should also provide one of the largest accessories lines. Gibson provide nearly everything you need to maintain good running order of your instrument - from strings to polish and picks.

There are four types of strings available in the new Equa Series, two light gauges, one for use on the Les Paul Series guitars. A medium and light gauge in phosphor bronze are also available. Gibson make nearly 30 different types of strings for guitar, banjo and mandolin as well as four different types for electric bass. There are Somatic Strings for use on arched-carved Gibsons, pure nickel, nickel-wrap and nickel-plated strings for electric guitar, Hi Fi flat wound and Round Wound ground to the feel of flat wound. Four different types of Mona Steel guitar strings in four different gauges are sold, they are the light, heavy, medium gauge and silver-plated copper wound versions.

Gibson specialise in making silk and steel folk guitar strings and also provide bronze and nylon classical guitar strings. There are Mona Steel 12 string sets and special sets and a variety of gauges for banjo, tenor banjo and mandolin.

Gibson sell a selection of replacement bridges for both semi-acoustic, solid and acoustic guitars. These include gold, nickel and chrome plated versions, two models with a rosewood base. There are four different guitar straps available, seven different types of plectrum, guitar polish, four capos and bottleneck slides.

Gibson can provide anything that you might ever need to clean, refurbish and keep your guitar in the best of running order. Gibson know exactly what you need, after all, they have been in the guitar making business since 1870.



# There is no energy shortage.



Remember the first time you played an electric guitar? How charged up both you and the sound were? You can experience that first time feeling all over again when you play an RD Artist guitar by Gibson.

Now there are three kinds of guitar. Acoustics. Electrics. And RDs.

The core of the RD sound is powered by *Active Electronics*—an ingenious refinement of recording studio technology developed by Dr. Robert Moog.

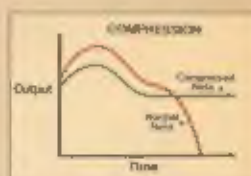
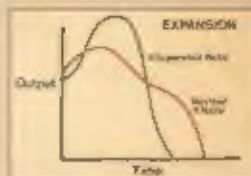
Active Electronics supercharges the sound. Just halfway up on the potentiometers puts you beyond where other guitars end. From that point on, there's a sense of power you've never felt before. And those pots are zero set, and calibrated to the exact ratio you dial, so both you and your RD perform with perfect precision.

Since you need so many guitars today, we made this one.

There's a lot more Active Electronics action—

like *expansion* and *compression* circuitry. It's a whole new freedom of expression that lets you engineer your own sound.

Expansion makes the notes explode off your pick. There's a strong attack followed by a fast decay. It adds musical dynamics to your picking attack. Compression spreads all the RD energy throughout the entire note. It swells. Sustains. And it even puts a ceiling on your sound, creating a peak limiter effect. Separate volume controls mix the compression and expansion. And the separate bass and treble controls allow you to independently mix low and high frequencies.



Dynamic control at your fingertips.

Expand your horizons even further with a sense of touch that's new to electrics—dynamic touch. Blow by blow, you can feel the power responding under your pick.

Take charge.

Still looking for the RD's mixing board? The incredible fact is all these different sound modes are triggered by just one simple toggle switch. We call it the *mode switch*. And there's still one more sound on the mode switch. The bright mode gives a fiery lead that makes its presence felt.

But, getting away from sound for a moment, the RD's got a body that doesn't quit. It balances itself beautifully, follows all your moves—speaks your body language. And the comfortable contours let your hand fall naturally in place, right in playing position.

We've made electric guitars since 1924. Today we make them electrifying.

The Artist is just one member of the RD family. There's three guitars and two basses. And each comes equipped with its own family of sounds. So, instead of looking for your next guitar, look for your last. The RD Series from Gibson.



## Gibson®



# Norlin

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In the UK: 114 Charing Cross Road, London WC2  
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